



## Rising out of Wreckage, Katrina Evacuees Find Shelter After the Storm

*DHS Helps Survivors Pick Up Pieces of Their Lives*

In his 80 years, Ezekiel Lambert says he had never experienced a storm anything like the surreal destruction of Hurricane Katrina. With her 125 mph winds and torrential rains that devastated the Gulf Coast, the storm claimed more than 1,000 lives.

Lambert, a self-described “die-hard” New Orleans resident, said he scoffed at officials’ warnings to flee in the face of the impending hurricane. After all, he had weathered some rough storms before—Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and Hurricane Camille, four years later.

His reluctance to leave his home in New Orleans’ Eighth Ward meant enduring eight days in four feet of toxic floodwaters from the hurricane and the breached levees of Lake Pontchartrain.



*Hurricane simulation*

Lambert is one of 295 evacuees who landed in the Washington area on September 6. Upon arrival, Lambert and others were transported by Metro bus to the D.C. Armory in Northeast, a designated American Red Cross shelter for victims of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. They were greeted by a cadre of city officials, Red Cross volunteers and Department of Human Services (DHS) employees who issued identification cards and determined whether evacuees needed immediate medical treatment, counseling, cash assistance and food stamps.

“The Department of Human Services has given me a second life. They’ve been tremendous. I’ve received food stamps, my unemployment, a pass to ride the Metro and an apartment,” Lambert said.

*“Things have been beautiful since day one here at the Armory. I’ve been treated like a king.”*

**Ezekiel Lambert**  
Katrina Evacuee

But, his memories of Katrina’s wrath remain vivid. What stands out in his mind is the sight of his beloved home’s foundation crumbling and turning to mush.

“I heard a bubbling sound, and it appeared to be cooked oatmeal [seeping through the floor],” Lambert said.

“Within five minutes, I had one foot of water in the house. Then, I heard a noise, and the water had knocked over the refrigerator. I looked again, and my furniture was floating like fish in the sea,” he said.

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**SURVIVORS**, From Page 1

## **DHS' Strong Families Program, Income Maintenance Administration (IMA) Help Evacuees Reunite with Family and Rebuild their Lives**

Despite the disaster, Lambert still flashes a bright smile and holds on tight to his sense of humor and perspective. That's probably what endeared Brandon James, a DHS case manager, to the spry senior.

James, 26, who works for DHS' Strong Families Program Division, helped Lambert find family members who were scattered throughout the United States. The Strong Families Division spearheaded the effort to locate and reunite families and individuals like Lambert with loved ones around the country.



*Left to right, Katrina evacuee Ezekiel Lambert and DHS case worker Brandon James at Homewood Suites in Northwest.*

"It was my birthday, so I invited him over. I wanted him to meet my grandfather, because they're both so similar. He's adopted me, and I've adopted him. Now, I think of Zeke as a member of my family," James said.

Lambert's experience at the D.C. Armory comes as no surprise to Penny Brooks, program administrator for the DHS Strong Families Division. Brooks said the Strong Families staff, a program team consisting of 39 case managers and clinical social workers, are no strangers to crises. In 2003, the Strong Families staff assisted District residents affected by the mercury spill at Ballou High School in Southeast and by Hurricane Isabel.

When Katrina evacuees arrived at the armory, the Strong Families staff worked round-the-clock collecting information and directing evacuees to the appropriate city and federal agencies for assistance that ranged from mental health services to housing.

"We not only assigned evacuees to individual caseworkers, but we also provided crisis intervention on-site at the armory from 8 a.m. until midnight. In addition, we continued to assist District residents," Brooks said. She noted that Strong Families assisted 387 evacuees.

Lynda Mosley, special assistant for the DHS Income Maintenance Administration (IMA) understands that tragedy can strike suddenly and without warning.

She said IMA staff not only provided Medicaid, food stamps and cash assistance to evacuees in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, they took time to listen.

"The evacuees are our heroes and heroines," Mosley said.

"So, we took the time to listen to their plights. We weren't so rigid that we didn't feel their pain. Throughout this entire ordeal, we've worked as a team to help evacuees maneuver through the armory, and we stayed with them until they felt comfortable."

IMA assisted more than 200 evacuees who applied for benefits, she said.

Mosley said that before she and her 12 colleagues got down to the nuts and bolts of helping hurricane survivors rebuild their lives, IMA staffers extended a warm greeting to each and every evacuee. "Welcome to D.C.," she said.

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## **Tax Relief for Eligible District Families**

The DC Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a tax credit for low and moderate income workers. This federally funded initiative, which allows eligible workers to get the EITC benefit as a refund even if they owe little or no income tax, lifts more children out of poverty than any other means-tested program.

Under the program, workers who have two or more children and who earned less than \$34,458 in 2004 are eligible for a credit of up to \$4,300 (up to \$2,604 with one child and an income under \$30,338). Workers without a qualifying child and who earn less than \$11,490 are eligible for a credit of up to \$390.

To qualify for EITC, a person must work full or part-time and have earned taxable income during the year.

If you know someone who could benefit from this program, have them call the Department of Human Services' "Answers, Please!" hotline at (202) 462-6311, or the District's general tax assistance line at (202) 727-4TAX or visit [www.dcfpi.org](http://www.dcfpi.org) for more information.



## FEMA Applauds DHS for Vision, Insight on Behalf of Children *ECEA Puts Children First during Hurricane Katrina Evacuation*

The federal agency responsible for providing relief when disaster strikes applauded the work of a Department of Human Services (DHS) administration in September for putting children first during the Hurricane Katrina evacuation.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) commended the Early Care and Education Administration (ECEA) formerly the Office of Early Childhood Development, for creating a cheerful child care area for infants and children inside the D.C. Armory in Northeast, a designated American Red Cross Shelter for victims of the Hurricane Katrina disaster.



*A youngster enjoys playtime at the D.C. Armory in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. A cheerful child care area was created for evacuees and their children.*

"The child care area was extremely helpful to parents who were already suffering. And, the daycare opened up this whole world for children. They seemed happy and well-adjusted there, and the staff was very attentive," said Suzie Sauerwalt, an individual assistance representative with FEMA Region III.

Sauerwalt, who arrived in the District the day Katrina evacuees moved into the 64,722 square-foot armory, showered accolades upon ECEA Administrator Barbara Kamara and her staff for providing a safe haven for children. She said that the ECEA team worked under "extraordinary circumstances" to ensure that the children were comfortable and at ease.

"I was very impressed. They [ECEA] did an excellent job," Sauerwalt said. The FEMA representative also credited the District for enrolling evacuees' children in schools immediately.

"The children returned delighted from school every day to tell us about their teachers," Sauerwalt said.

### **DHS, District Agencies Chart a Plan**

During an emergency planning meeting on September 5, one day before 295 Katrina evacuees arrived in the District, ECEA Administrator Barbara Kamara, Red Cross personnel and staffers from D.C. Parks and Recreation (DPR), gathered at the armory to exchange ideas on how to help children and parents in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, an unprecedented American tragedy that claimed more than 1,000 lives.

Kamara, who holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Development, rallied her staff and converted a dreary space in the main hall of the armory into an inviting child care facility. The child care area, located next to the DHS Command Center, included stuffed animals, colorful table and chair sets for pint-sized people, books, jigsaw puzzles, crayons, coloring books, and an assortment of toys that could have rivaled the famous F.A.O. Schwarz toy store in New York. Toddlers crawled and played on carpet under the watchful eye of child care professionals who staffed the area from dawn until dusk.

"[Since] children were expected [at the armory], we needed to engage them while their parents embarked upon rebuilding their lives after the devastation of the hurricane," Kamara said.

"When people plan for disasters, they don't typically think about children. We [ECEA staff] didn't know how many children to expect, we didn't know their ages, but once we got in the armory and started working, the area was transformed. We brought in the kinds of things that would be found in a regular child care facility," she said.

Kamara said more than 86 children who ranged in age from one month to 14 years benefited from the child care area. Child care workers and volunteers visited the armory daily to read stories and play educational games with the children.

Kamara said about 12 children enrolled in District child care programs supported by ECEA. Transportation was provided by the Department of Health's (DOH) Maternal and Family Health Administration. The majority of school age children who stayed at the armory participated in an array of activities scheduled before and after classes at the students' respective schools.

"We were the only child care facility in the country that accepted evacuees and provided structured programs for children," Kamara said.

Lillie Cargo, a Katrina evacuee, said that being able to take her 14-month-old daughter, Tiyell, to a subsidized child care facility helped in many ways. Cargo said that she needed time to put her life back together after the storm.



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"Every day a van would arrive at the armory and take us to the child care center where I dropped my daughter off. It allowed me to complete forms and take care of the business [at hand]," Cargo, 24, said.

"It helped so much. I wasn't working and I didn't know how I was going to pay. All I had to do was sign up. Everything was taken care of," she said.

Throughout the evacuees month-long stay at the armory, ECEA partnered with several District agencies that included DPR, DOH and the D.C. Department of Mental Health (DMH). Kamara said DMH provided consultants to work with children whose lives had been disrupted by the abrupt exodus from their homes.

"So many have been impacted by the hurricane. Parents have been impacted. Children have been impacted. We wanted to provide the support parents needed to help their children," Kamara said.

## IMA Receives Cash Bonus from USDA

*Administration helps Low-Income Access Food Stamp Benefits*



*IMA Administrator Kate Jesberg and Deputy Director of Programs Vanessa Chappell-Lee, with Roberto Salazar, Administrator with USDA and other officials.*

Federal officials and Department of Human Services' (DHS) directors, administrators and employees attended an award ceremony in November to salute the DHS Income Maintenance Administration (IMA) for ensuring that low-income District residents have access to the Food Stamp Program.

About 30 guests filed through the doors of the John A. Wilson Building in Northwest to lend their support to IMA during an hour-long ceremony in the Mayor's Press Conference Room. The crowd cheered when Roberto Salazar, administrator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), presented Vanessa Chappell-Lee, DHS Deputy Director for Programs and Kate Jesberg, IMA Administrator with a ceremonial bonus check for more than \$440,000.

"It's about access – those whom we serve rely on the Food Stamp Program – and access is so critical. We can't ensure that benefits reach them if they don't have access," Salazar said.



*IMA Administrator Kate Jesberg, shares recognition with the IMA staff for helping low-income residents access food stamp benefits.*

"...It is thanks to efforts like the District's that the Food Stamp Program remains the strong and stable cornerstone of our nutrition assistance safety net," he said.

IMA received the hefty bonus for having one of the four highest food stamp participant access rates in the nation. The IMA achieved 95.6 percent participation among eligible recipients, according to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

The Food Stamp Program, which is administered by the USDA, supports low-income households and individuals who are making a transition from welfare to work by providing resources so that they can buy food. Last year, the Food Stamp Program helped feed 86,817 District residents. Since 2003, the District has received \$1.4 million in bonus money for its outstanding operation of the program.

Chappell-Lee who attended the ceremony on behalf of DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist thanked Salazar and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service for acknowledging the efforts of the District and DHS.

"Truly, this is a great honor for the District and for the Department of Human Services. The federal government consistently recognizes our work," Chappell-Lee said.

"The Department of Human Services' Income Maintenance Administration is truly reaching higher heights. This means that Kate [Jesberg] and the IMA staff are doing an outstanding job," she said.

Jesberg beamed throughout the event. She thanked the USDA, but more importantly, she took the opportunity to thank her team.

"I'm really humbled. I can't thank you enough. We're truly honored by the Food and Nutrition Service," Jesberg said.

"But our success is not only in the TANF Food Stamp Program, it's in the workplace – finding people jobs and making sure that they have medical assistance. We've done a lot to help those who have less," she said to rousing applause.

## DHS Plans Renovations, Improved Delivery of Services at D.C. Village *Director Promises Change. On-Site Center to Follow at Southwest Facility*

At a public hearing before a D.C. Council committee in October, Yvonne Gilchrist, director of the Department of Human Services (DHS), outlined a plan to renovate D.C. Village, a shelter for homeless families in Southwest. She also promised to provide better delivery of services to parents and children living at the shelter.

Residents complained recently about squalid living conditions at D.C. Village. Gilchrist, testifying before the Committee on Human Services, vowed to make major changes to the facility that houses 68 families. She told the committee, chaired by Adrian M. Fenty (D-Ward 4), and a group of disgruntled residents who attended the hearing on the premises of D.C. Village that she plans to forge stronger alliances with District government agencies.

Her approach to upgrading the shelter will be two-fold.

"I am committed to reforming the delivery of services for homeless families. This will not only entail strengthening our partnerships with the Office of Early Childhood Development, the Departments of Health, Mental Health and Parks and Recreation, but will also require improvements in the physical plant," Gilchrist said.

"On a short term basis, we will improve the maintenance and housekeeping conditions in the building. On a longer-term basis, I want to use capital dollars to reconfigure the living space within the facility. This renovation will allow families to have private apartment style space, as is required under the Homeless Services Reform Act," she said.

Gilchrist told the committee that D.C. Village was never intended for use as a year-round shelter. Three years ago, it was converted from winter use to year-round due to demand.

In November, DHS turned over daily maintenance of D.C. Village to two local non-profit agencies that contract with the District to provide services to the homeless. Family Services Administrator (FSA) Ricardo Lyles said in an article that was published in the Washington Post that the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness and the Coalition for the Homeless "... can respond to repair and maintenance requests more quickly than government." The FSA provides services to low-income and homeless individuals.

Gilchrist said DHS plans to open an on-site service center at D.C. Village next year. The center will provide employment information, benefits and other services.

## DHS Launches Hypothermia Watch Campaign *Public Urged to Help Save Lives, Call Hypothermia Hotline When Temps Dip*

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has launched its annual Hypothermia Watch Partner Campaign, which was established in 2001, to protect and save the lives of thousands of homeless citizens in the District during the winter months.

The winter hypothermia season started on November 1, 2005 and ends March 31, 2006. District residents are urged to become Hypothermia Watch Partners by calling the Hypothermia Hotline

**"HELP BRING THE HOMELESS IN FROM THE COLD"**



*The new Hypothermia Watch Partner campaign on Metro buses and inside subway stations throughout the winter, urge the public to call the Hypothermia Hotline.*

at **1-800-535-7252** to report the location of homeless persons who are on the streets during freezing weather.

Hypothermia, a potentially fatal condition, occurs when body temperature drops to 95 degrees Fahrenheit or below. Symptoms include slurred speech, a weak pulse, shallow breathing, a slow heartbeat and drowsiness.

"This winter, we have increased [our] capacity to serve homeless women at the Hermano Pedro Center [in Northwest]. We're also adding capacity to serve homeless men in Southeast with the addition of St. Vincent DePaul's Catholic Church, which will provide 25 beds," said Yvonne Gilchrist, director of the Department of Human Services. St. Luke's Church in Northwest will operate throughout the winter season to accommodate homeless men in Northwest.

Gilchrist said 1,822 shelter beds will be available for men, women and families throughout this year's hypothermia season, an increase over last year's 1,703 beds. There were no hypothermia-related fatalities among the homeless last year, she said.

"We are going to continue to work in partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation which provides space for the overflow capacity of women at the Kennedy Recreation Center, and for men at the Banneker Recreation Center in Northwest," she said.

"D.C. Village will also be available throughout the season once the renovations to Cottage 2-B are completed. This site will provide 25 units or approximately 75 beds for homeless families," Gilchrist said.

The director said DHS also has access to the Sobering Center on the grounds of D.C. General in Southeast. The Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) will continue to train its officers about

## DHS Employees Rally in Support of Katrina Evacuees, Forgo Last Days of Summer *A Convoy En Route to New Orleans, Determined to Help*

A caravan of buses staffed with scores of social workers and volunteers from the Department of Human Services (DHS), medical personnel and police officers set out on a rescue mission in September with the hopes of bringing back hundreds of Katrina evacuees to the District of Columbia.



The 20 DHS employees who made the trip gave up their Labor Day weekend to travel to New Orleans to assist in a rescue effort organized by the District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency (DCEMA). With only one day's notice, DHS staff stockpiled food, water and supplies, and gathered at the D.C. Armory. DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist met the group in Northeast and briefed employees on their duties upon arrival in the waterlogged city.

On August 29, Hurricane Katrina, a powerful Category 3 storm packing 125 mile-per-hour winds, slammed into New Orleans. Rain, wind damage and a subsequent break in levees devastated the port city.

Each of the 55 passengers on board the fleet of 10 motor coaches had a different reason for taking the 1,500-mile trek through the heart of the South, but they all shared one goal: to help those left behind after the hurricane's march of destruction through the Gulf Coast region. DHS Chief of Staff Peggy Massey said that she felt compelled to volunteer her time to help Katrina survivors for several reasons.

"I'm committed to human services. I saw the human need and I felt that there was something that I could do," she said.

Massey, a native of South Carolina, has a love for New Orleans that runs deep. Her beloved alma mater, Xavier University of Louisiana, America's only historically black Catholic college, was ravaged during the hurricane and flooding. Massey said she spent her formative years on the campus of the private liberal arts college founded in 1915 by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She graduated with degrees in Political Science and English, before moving to New England where she earned a law degree from Boston College.

"The school prepared me for meeting my life's journeys, including the daily challenges at DHS. So, I wanted to be the first on the bus," Massey said.

The loss of New Orleans was a great loss for me. That's why the trip was not the ending ... it was the beginning. I intend to go back and help to rebuild Xavier and the city," she said.



*DHS Director Yvonne Gilchrist briefs employees at the D.C. Armory before buses leave for New Orleans.*

For Wonda Hodge Logan, volunteerism comes naturally. Hodge Logan, a management liaison specialist with the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration (MRDDA), said she volunteers at her church, Second Baptist in Southwest and in her Southeast neighborhood. A DHS employee since 1998, Hodge Logan said that when she learned about the trip to New Orleans, she knew what she had to do.

"I felt I had to help. I volunteer in other capacities, but this was heartbreaking. And, television does not compare with what one can see with the naked eye," she said.

Hodge Logan said that she was sure the devastation of New Orleans was far worse than what the media conveyed in its television coverage. After seeing the damage first-hand, she said she remembered thinking, "It's unreal."

"I've always wanted to travel to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, but I never thought in a million years that I would go there for a tragedy," Hodge Logan said.

When Anthony Washington, a 13-year veteran of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), learned in a Northeast barber-shop that New Orleans police had abandoned their posts during one of the most horrific natural disasters of the century, he quickly signed on for the four-day rescue assignment.

Washington, 35, who works at the 5<sup>th</sup> District Police Station in Northeast, prides himself on being a dedicated officer. He said it was his duty to help the residents of New Orleans.

"It was a quick, but easy decision [to volunteer to go to New Orleans]. This is why I became a cop — to help people," Washington said.



*DHS Chief of Staff Peggy Massey joined in the rescue effort to help Katrina evacuees. Massey plans to return to New Orleans to help rebuild her alma mater, Xavier University.*



## A Survivor's Story

### *DHS Helps Katrina Evacuee Begin a New Life in the District*

Billy Joe Allen says he had never ventured far from his native Louisiana homestead, yet after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding in late August, little remained for him and thousands of other New Orleans residents to call home.



*A downtown New Orleans street after Hurricane Katrina breached the levees of Lake Pontchartrain.*

"I lost everything but my life," Allen, 50, said.

Today, Allen enjoys a fully furnished home in Southeast thanks to the efforts of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Strong Families Program, part of the Family Services Administration (FSA). The Katrina evacuee received furnishings for his new apartment, appliances and all of the amenities of home.

#### **HYPOTHERMIA**, From Page 5

hypothermia and the importance of transporting intoxicated individuals to the Sobering Center.

The DHS Family Services Administration (FSA) assists the District's homeless and low-income families through a contract with the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness in Southeast. The non-profit, manages the city's shelters for the homeless and works with other non-profit organizations and advocacy groups to protect the lives of the homeless during the winter.

When the public calls the Hypothermia Hotline, the United Planning Organization (UPO), a DHS partner, dispatches a van to the reported location and picks up the homeless individual or family. The passengers are then transported to a nearby shelter. UPO drivers also distribute blankets, warm beverages and clothing to homeless persons.

DHS urges you to become a Hypothermia Watch Partner. Be aware of homeless individuals on city streets when the temperature plummets. Call the Hypothermia Hotline at **1-800-535-7252**.



"DHS services are remarkable," Allen said of FSA's immediate response to the needs of Katrina evacuees.

A week before Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama; Allen watched news reports that forecast the impending wrath of the Category 5 storm. He thought Katrina would surely "make a turn," [away from New Orleans]. He never imagined that the hurricane would throw his world into a tailspin.

Troopers found Allen after three days of being submerged in chemical and sewage-filled waters. Rescue workers transported him by helicopter to Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport where he joined hundreds of other evacuees en route to the District. Katrina evacuees arrived at Dulles International Airport on September 6, 2005. They were driven by Metro bus to the D.C. Armory in Northeast, a designated Red Cross shelter.



*Left to right, Penny Brooks, program administrator for FSA Strong Families Program, Billy Joe Allen, a Katrina evacuee and Patricia Handy, homeless services coordinator at the D.C. Armory in Northeast.*

DHS staff at the armory helped Allen and others get food stamps, cash assistance and medical insurance. Allen said DHS employees also helped him secure permanent housing in the area through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The lanky, six-foot-tall evacuee said he was most impressed by the courteous way in which DHS staff treated him and fellow evacuees during their month-long stay at the armory. Allen experienced only a few weeks of an uncertain future.

Malva Abuhatab, a caseworker with Strong Families, assisted Allen in every way possible.

"HUD supplied him with a voucher for an apartment in Southeast, and the Strong Families Program helped him to get furniture, appliances, food stamps and Medicaid," Abuhatab said.

"Now, Strong Families is helping him find a job," she said.

## RSA Expo Links Disabled to Jobs

According to a study published by the Urban Institute, a District-based research clearinghouse in Northwest, an estimated 63 percent of the nation's disabled are unemployed.

Lisa Morrison, who lives in Southeast, said she has not worked in 16 years, not because she didn't want to—employers refused to hire her. Morrison, a former clerk typist for the D.C. Public Housing Authority, left the job force after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS), an autoimmune disease of the central nervous system, in 1987.

In September, Morrison, 44, said she applied for a retail position in Crystal City, VA. She had hoped the job opportunity would bring an end to decades of unemployment, but her hopes were dashed when she was told that there were no jobs available for her. The disease has impaired Morrison's speech pattern and she uses a cane to help her walk.

"I was kind of hurt because I figured they probably only said that because I had a disability and hadn't worked in 16 years," Morrison said. "That was all [they] looked at," she said.

In response to the high number of unemployed disabled citizens in the District of Columbia, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), part of the Department of Human Services (DHS), sponsored a career fair in October. At the daylong event, RSA clients interviewed with recruiters and learned about available jobs and the accommodations these companies have made for persons with disabilities.

"The event was an immediate success for some of our clients," said Lloyd Buckner, RSA's Chief of Marketing and Business Services. Mr. Buckner coordinated the Expo that was held at One Judiciary Square in Northwest. "Ten people were hired on the spot, with one client being asked to report to duty the very next business day," he said.

More than 300 RSA clients braved rainy weather to attend the job fair that attracted representatives from 22 organizations, including the D.C. Office of Personnel; the City of Alexandria; CVS Pharmacy; Safeway; the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority.

"Between Washington Dulles International and Ronald Reagan National airports, there are 35,000 jobs, and we're always looking to broaden our diversity and increase our applicant pool," said Sharon Breighner, an employment specialist with the Metropolitan Airports Authority.

CVS recently signed an agreement to hire graduates of New Vision Photography, a contractor for the Mental Retardation and Developmental Administration (MRDDA), another DHS agency dedicated to assisting District residents with disabilities.

"We wanted to let [this community] know that we hire the hearing-and-sight impaired and have facilities to accommodate them," said Regional Recruiting Center Coordinator Charnetia Young.



*Crystal Hairston, management liaison specialist at DHS talks with job applicant Lisa Morrison at Expo.*

Young said CVS has more to offer than just rank-and-file jobs. Those who qualify can also secure positions in management.

"We're not just offering jobs, we offer a career path. It's not just where they start, but where they can go from there."

Fifteen RSA clients voiced an interest in working for the U.S. Postal Service and filled out applications in the hope of getting one of the federal government jobs. Although the USDA did not accept applications at the Expo, it eagerly promoted the agency's varied opportunities.

"[We] look at ways that [we] can get people with disabilities working in the agency," said Lisa Fyall, an Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist with the Disability Employee Award Program at USDA.

"We look at those with targeted disabilities (physical disabilities that are visible to others) as well as those that are not targeted. Then, we do training to get rid of stereotypes so that when a person with a disability does apply, they can actually get the job," she said.

Encouraged by Fyall's remarks, Morrison said she would go online and apply for one of the agency's positions. She wants to rejoin the workforce, she said. Although, Morrison did not receive a job offer at the Expo, she remains positive.

"This is the first time I've ever gone to a job fair for disabled adults, Morrison said.

"Some of us want to return to work, but people think we can't do the job because of our disability. We needed something like this," she said.